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ABSTRACT

The goal of this year-long project was to foster coherence throughout the humanities program, an interdisciplinary, team-taught sequence of four required undergraduate courses. The humanities program has no faculty of its own, but draws instructors from existing departments throughout the university. Growth of the program has brought diversification of participating faculty. The project sought to increase program coherence by increasing faculty understanding of the program as a whole and the individual courses in it, by increasing unity and community among the staff, and by preparing staff better for their teaching assignments through (1) a year-long faculty development seminar in the humanities and (2) semester-long faculty internships in humanities courses the faculty members had not previously taught. Funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities allowed faculty reassignment to the internship and seminar, permitted payments to seminar leaders, and purchased reading material for the seminar. A total of 37 faculty members from 17 departments participated in the faculty development seminar, and 20 faculty from 12 departments interned in 1 of the 4 humanities courses. There was some overlap between these groups. (Author/MSE)

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FOSTERING COHERENCE IN A UNIVERSITY-WIDE HUMANITIES PROGRAM THROUGH A COMPREHENSIVE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project is funded with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.

The goal of the year-long project was to foster coherence throughout the Humanities Program; the Humanities program is an interdisciplinary, team-taught sequence of four courses required of all undergraduates at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. The Humanities program has no faculty members of its own; instead, it draws instructors from existing departments throughout the University. As the institution's enrollment has increased, the Humanities Program faculty has become larger and more diverse, including, for instance, more individuals with graduate education outside the traditional fields of the Humanities.

The project sought to increase coherence in the Humanities Program by increasing faculty understanding of the program as a whole and of the individual courses in it; by increasing unity and community among the staff; and by preparing staff better for their teaching assignments before they begin them. The efforts toward this goal had two main components: (1) a year-long faculty development seminar in the Humanities and (2) semester-long faculty internships in Humanities courses which they had not previously taught.

Funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities provided funds to reassign faculty to the internship and the seminar, permitted small payments to seminar leaders from the campus and from off campus, and purchased primary source reading materials for the seminar.

A total of thirty-seven faculty members from seventeen academic departments participated in the faculty development

seminar, while twenty faculty members from twelve academic departments interned in one of the four Humanities courses. There was some overlap between these two groups.

BACKGROUND

The program in Humanities at the University of North Carolina at Asheville is a four-course, sixteen hour sequence of interdisciplinary courses: The Ancient World, the Rise of European Civilizations, the Modern World, and The Future and the Individual. It is taught by faculty members drawn from many different departments in the University. Though a number of the faculty involved in the Humanities program have taught in several or all the four courses, others teach in only one.

In 1985-86 a year-long evaluation and assessment of the Humanities Program revealed that the greatest need of the program was to develop coherence throughout the four-course sequence for faculty and students alike, by developing faculty understanding of the objectives and (above all) of the content of all four Humanities courses and of the program as a whole. Such a development was seen as crucial to improving the instruction of students, as faculty sharing a common understanding of material covered in all the courses would be better able to make connections among the courses and to share with students a more global understanding of the aims and content of the whole sequence.

The proposal to the NEH emphasized these goals and predicted that the outcomes of the project should be improved faculty understanding and effectiveness, improved and revitalized teaching, and curricular revision and enrichment.

DESCRIPTION

The program had, as described earlier, two components.

I. The Faculty Development Seminar enrolled thirty-seven faculty members from fourteen academic disciplines; some of these were current and past faculty members in the Humanities Program, while for others this was the first contact with the program. Participants read primary texts from the history of ideas; the Seminar met every other week for discussion of these texts, under the guidance of seminar leaders, some of whom were specialists brought in from other universities while others were specialists from our own faculty.

The list of books read by the seminar is as follows:

Homer, The Iliad

Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War

Augustine, Confessions

Chaucer, Canterbury Tales

Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part I

Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (selections)

Swift, Gulliver's Travels

Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France

Shelley, Frankenstein

Dostoevsky, Notes from Underground

Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents

Mao Tse-tung, Selected Writings

Kuhn, Structure of Scientific Revolutions

After the completion of the NEH Grant for the Faculty Development Seminar, it was continued for the 1988-89 academic year, at the insistence of the participants and using Humanities Program funds to defray costs of materials; because there were no funds for reassigned time for participants, the reading load was reduced for this second year.

II. Internships. Twenty faculty members from twelve academic disciplines participated as interns. They were granted reassigned time, paid for by the Grant, to intern in one of the four Humanities courses. This required that they attend all lectures and specially scheduled visiting lectures and cultural events; perform all the reading assigned to students and a significant additional amount to contextualize the assignments; attend Humanities classes at least three times per week to observe the methods and concepts employed in them; attend weekly staff meetings; and write a final report.

Each intern worked primarily with one experience Humanities Program teacher, or Mentor, to foster a coherent view of the course as a whole, and also visited classes of most of the teaching team throughout the semester. This play produced an apppreciation of unity and diversity of point of view and of teaching methodology.

Costs: Costs covered by the grant from NEH were

Personnel costs: coordinator's salary, reassigned time for participants, fringe benefits:	$ 88,800
Seminar leaders & consultant	1,400

Travel and Lodging	2,900
Books for seminar participants	1,740
TOTAL NEH FUNDS	$ 94,840
Cost sharing and in-kind contributions	486,453
TOTAL	$ 581,323

RESULTS

The grant report was evaluated internally by means of written interns' reports, by biweekly surveys of usefulness of texts read in the Seminar, by interns' meetings, and--most important--in regular weekly staff meetings of the courses, as well as by the statistical pre- and post-survey/questionnaire administered to participating faculty and to all students in the program. In addition, Professor John Leyerle, University of Toronto and President of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, visited the campus in September and April and attended faculty development seminar meetings and team meetings of the course coordinators.

The evaluations indicate that the grant has positively affected faculty perception of program coherence throughout the Humanities Program. The statistical synopsis of the results of fall and spring surveys showed numerical measurement of change in perceived coherence; statistical analysis by the UNCA Office of Institutional Research indicated that measured shifts indicating increased coherence were highly meaningful, statistically. On every question asked about increased understanding of the

Program, its goals and content, and its coherence, the participants better understood the coherence of the Program at the end of the grant period than at the beginning.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Measured by a variety of standards the project for Improving Coherence in the Humanities Program was a success. The budget was adequate to support the one-year project; its activities have been continued, on a somewhat reduced scale, using internal funds from the University's sources.

This program is most useful, probably, where an interdisciplinary program like the one in Humanities at UNCA coexists with a less-than-ideal level of understanding, or simply information, about its goals, its practices, and above all what makes it a unified whole. This need for greater understanding was found to exist even among some of those teaching in the Program.

Where such a situation exists, the kind of program invented by the Project Director and Coordinator at UNCA should be adaptable to other institutions and replicable there.